ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

World Press

O. 4 – APR

$2.50 ($4.00 CANADA)

EXTRA!

DATELINE: NEW YORK CITY

KEITH MICHAELS, WORLD PRESS CORRESPONDENT, STROLLS TOWARD HIS OFFICE, IDLY WONDERING WHAT HIS NEXT ASSIGNMENT WILL BE, WHEN...

HEY! WAIT! COME BACK HERE!
THE CAR ROARS AWAY FROM THE CURB AND VANISHES IN TRAFFIC. KEITH RISES WARILY...
THAT BOY WAS PLAYING FOR KEEPS! A BANK JUST ROBBED, AND I'M SITTING RIGHT ON TOP OF A HOT STORY!
A FEW MOMENTS LATER, INSIDE THE BANK...
THAT'S IT, MAC! NO ONE SAW THE BANDIT'S FACE, EXCEPT ME! HIS MASK SLIPPED WHEN HE... YEAH... THE POLICE ARE HERE NOW! I'LL FOLLOW IT UP!
HMP... BENT MATCHES...
OH... YOU NOTICED THEM, TOO, CAPTAIN?
YES! THE GIRL OVER THERE SAID SHE SAW THE BANDIT STANDING HERE, BUT DIDN'T GET A LOOK AT HIS FACE! YOU KNOW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE, MICHAELS! I'M GOING TO HAVE TO BRING YOU DOWN TO HEADQUARTERS!
FOR THE NEXT THREE HOURS KEITH PORES THROUGH THE ROGUES GALLERY BEFORE AN IDENTIFICATION IS MADE...
EDDIE BRODER, EH? HE'S KILLED BEFORE. WE'LL SEND OUT AN ALARM... HEY! WHERE YOU GOING, MICHAELS?
TO MY OFFICE. I'VE A STORY TO WORK ON! YOU FELLAS ARE THROUGH WITH ME, AREN'T YOU?
SURE. BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN IDENTIFY BRODER! HE ALMOST KILLED A BANK TELLER TODAY, MICHAELS! IT'LL BE SAFER IF WE SEND A MAN ALONG WITH YOU!
NO THANKS, CAPTAIN! I APPRECIATE THE OFFER BUT I CAN'T STAND MEN!

A SHORT WHILE LATER, AT THE OFFICES OF WORLD PRESS...

WHEW! THANKS, JONESY! I'D NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET THROUGH THAT PACK OF NEWSHOUNDS OUT THERE!

MISTER MICHAELS! MISTER MICHAELS!

SOME FELLOW'S BEEN TRYING TO GET YOU FOR THE PAST HOUR! WILL YOU...

SWITCH IT TO MAC'S OFFICE, HONEY! I'LL TAKE IT IN THERE!

KEITH! IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU...

HOLD IT A SEC, MAC! I JUST WANT TO TAKE THIS CALL...

HELLO! YES, THIS IS MICHAELS... ***BRODER!*** WHAT? YOU WANT TO GIVE YOURSELF UP? YES...

YES...I GOT IT! NO, I WON'T...NO, I... ***CLICK!*** HE HUNG UP!

MAC, THIS IS THE HOTTEST YARN IN MONTHS! BRODER WANTS TO SURRENDER... TO ***ME***, NOT THE POLICE! WANTS ME TO MEET HIM... ALONE!

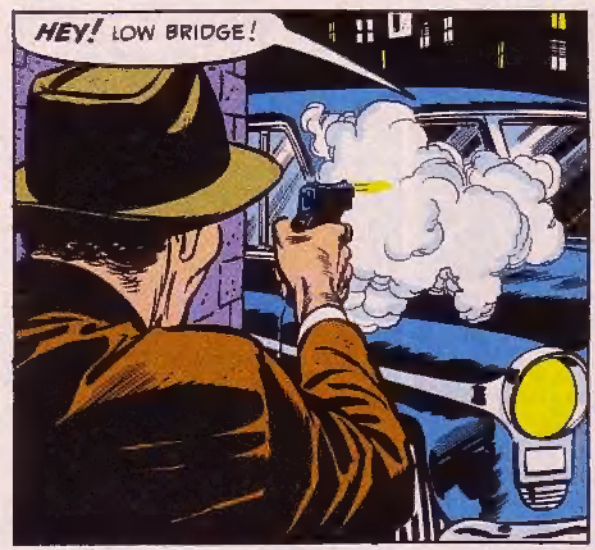
NOTHING DOING! IT'S EITHER A GAG, OR A TRAP! EITHER WAY, I... ...***COME BACK HERE!***

...POLICE HEADQUARTERS...

OKAY MICHAELS, HE'S GOT US OVER A BARREL! IF IT ***IS*** BRODER, IT MAY BE JUST A TRAP TO ELIMINATE YOU! BUT IF YOU'RE WILLING TO RISK IT... WE MAY BE ABLE TO NAB HIM! I'LL GET YOU A CAR!

TENSELY, KEITH DRIVES A POLICE SEDAN DEEP INTO THE EAST SIDE TO WHERE THE RENDEZVOUS IS TO TAKE PLACE...

THAT'S THE ADDRESS! I'D FEEL A LOT BETTER IF... ***UH-OH!*** THAT MUST BE BRODER...



ARGUMENT IS FUTILE. TOGETHER WITH O'BRIEN, KEITH RETURNS TO THE WORLD PRESS OFFICES...

ANGRILY, KEITH TURNS FROM THE GROUP AND STEPS OUT INTO THE STREET...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, MICHAELS? DON'T YOU LIKE BEING PAGE ONE MATERIAL?

YEAH... C'MON!

LOOK OUT, MICHAELS!

SOMEBODY TRIED TO RUN HIM DOWN!

YOU OKAY, KEITH?

THAT WAS BRODER AGAIN, MICHAELS! HE'S NOT WASTING ANY TIME!

THANKS, O'BRIEN... I GUESS I OWE YOU ONE!

BUT DAYS PASS AND NOTHING FURTHER HAPPENS. THE ANNOYANCE OF BEING CHAPERONED AGAIN ASSERTS ITSELF....

YOU JOKERS AGAIN? FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE! CAN'T I EVEN COME TO WORK WITHOUT RUNNING INTO YOU? DON'T YOU HAVE HOMES?!

SURE WE HAVE! BUT OUR EDITORS WANT US TO BE RIGHT ON THE SPOT WHEN BRODER FINALLY CATCHES UP TO YOU!

HA! YOU CHARACTERS KILL ME! HEY!

RAMPART! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO? BLIND ME?!

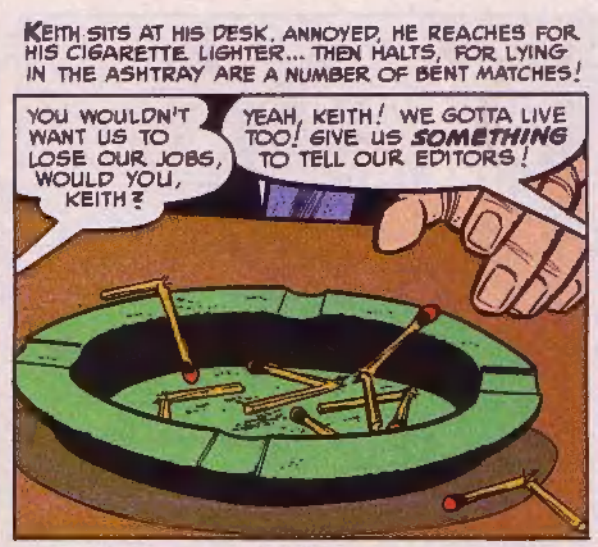
CALM DOWN, KEITH! I JUST FIGURED I'D GET ONE GOOD SHOT OF YOU. I WANT TO REMEMBER YOU JUST AS YOU ARE... AFTER YOU'RE GONE!

THIS IS GETTING ME DOWN! MY STUFF DOESN'T EVEN MAKE SENSE ANYMORE! HOW LONG DOES THIS GO ON?!

YOU KNOW THE ANSWER AS WELL AS I DO, MICHAELS!... UNTIL WE'VE GOT BRODER ON ICE!

BRODER! LOOK! ONCE AND FOR ALL...I DON'T NEED A BODYGUARD! I DON'T WANT A BODYGUARD!
YOU'RE A MATERIAL WITNESS, SO YOU GET A BODYGUARD! GOING TO LUNCH? GOOD ... I CAN USE A SANDWICH!
THERE IS NO RELIEF. LUNCH IS ANOTHER DISMAL AFFAIR...
I LIKE YOU, O'BRIEN, BUT I'VE BEEN LOOKING AT YOU FOR DAYS ON END! CAN'T YOU GET LOST? JUST FOR AN HOUR...
DON'T MOVE!
THAT MAN AT THE TABLE BY THE DOOR. I GOT A GLIMPSE OF HIS FACE, JUST FOR A SECOND. I THINK IT'S BRODER!
GET DOWN AND STAY DOWN! IT IS BRODER!
HE'S GONE! WE'LL NEVER FIND HIM IN THIS MOB!
BUT HERE COMES THAT PACK OF NEWSHAWKS! THEY KNOW I EAT HERE EVERY DAY! LET'S GET BACK TO THE OFFICE!
BAK
MAC! BRODER JUST TOOK A SHOT AT ME AND GOT AWAY! I'LL HAVE THE STORY TYPED IN TWENTY MINUTES... IF YOU CAN KEEP THOSE OTHER HOUNDS OFF MY NECK!
6

COME ON, FELLAS, CLEAR OUT! LEAVE ME ALONE! I'VE A STORY... AND YOU'RE NOT GETTING ONE WORD OF IT!
WE'RE YOUR PALS, KEITH! HOW MANY SHOTS WERE FIRED?
C'MON! GIVE! DID HE SAY ANYTHING TO YOU?

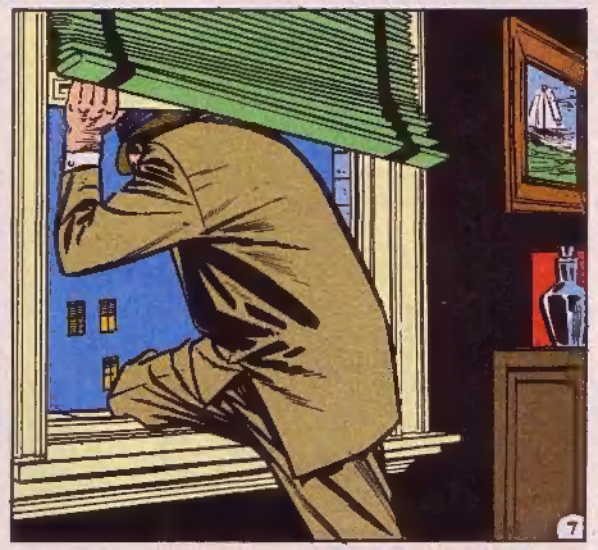

KEITH SITS AT HIS DESK, ANNOYED, HE REACHES FOR HIS CIGARETTE LIGHTER... THEN HALTS, FOR LYING IN THE ASHTRAY ARE A NUMBER OF BENT MATCHES!
YOU WOULDN'T WANT US TO LOSE OUR JOBS, WOULD YOU, KEITH?
YEAH, KEITH! WE GOTTA LIVE TOO! GIVE US SOMETHING TO TELL OUR EDITORS!

O'BRIEN! GET RID OF THESE GUYS, WILL YOU?
OKAY, MICHAELS! C'MON, FELLAS... OUT!

AS SOON AS O'BRIEN HERDS THE DISAPPOINTED NEWSMEN OUT TO THE ELEVATORS, KEITH LEAPS FROM HIS CHAIR, SLAMS AND LOCKS THE DOOR BEHIND THEM...
CLICK

DON'T MOVE!
COME ON IN, BRODER! I'M EXPECTING YOU!

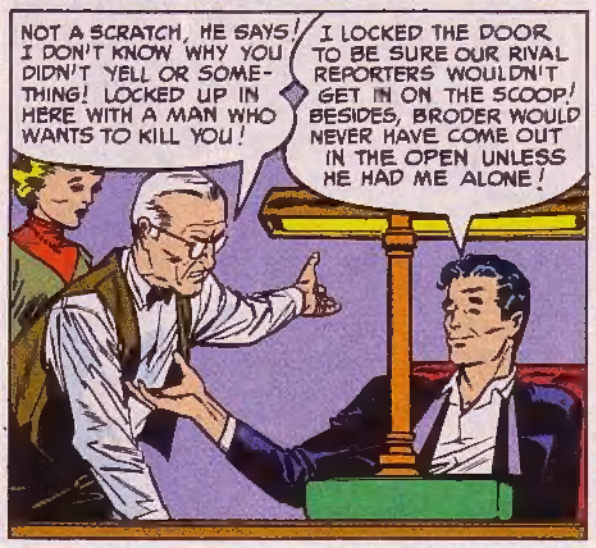
YEAH? THEN YOU SHOULD BE EXPECTING THIS TOO!



WE HEARD A SHOT! WHAT HAPPENED?!
IT'S BRODER!
RAMPART! GET A SHOT OF THAT!

OKAY, MICHAELS... I'LL TAKE OVER NOW! THANKS FOR WRAPPING HIM UP FOR ME!
A PLEASURE, O'BRIEN! I JUST HOPE YOU NEVER HAVE TO RETURN THE FAVOR!

KEITH! YOU IDIOT! ARE YOU OKAY?
NOT A SCRATCH, HONEY! ARE THOSE OTHER NEWSHAWKS GONE? I GOT A STORY TO WRITE!


NOT A SCRATCH, HE SAYS! I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU DIDN'T YELL OR SOMETHING! LOCKED UP IN HERE WITH A MAN WHO WANTS TO KILL YOU!
I LOCKED THE DOOR TO BE SURE OUR RIVAL REPORTERS WOULDN'T GET IN ON THE SCOOP! BESIDES, BRODER WOULD NEVER HAVE COME OUT IN THE OPEN UNLESS HE HAD ME ALONE!

HONESTLY, KEITH! I SOMETIMES THINK YOU'RE WORSE THAN A CHILD! IT'S LUCKY HE MISSED YOU!
OH, HE DIDN'T MISS! BUT I WAS WEARING THIS... A BULLET-PROOF VEST! COMPLIMENTS OF THE POLICE! THE BOYS IN BLUE DON'T MISS A TRICK, SWEETHEART!
THE END

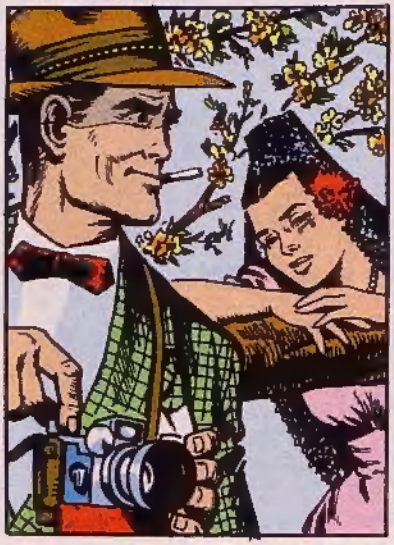
STEVE RAMPART

BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY OR NOT, THIS MEXICAN SCENERY IS TOO GOOD TO PASS UP!

JOHN SEVERIN

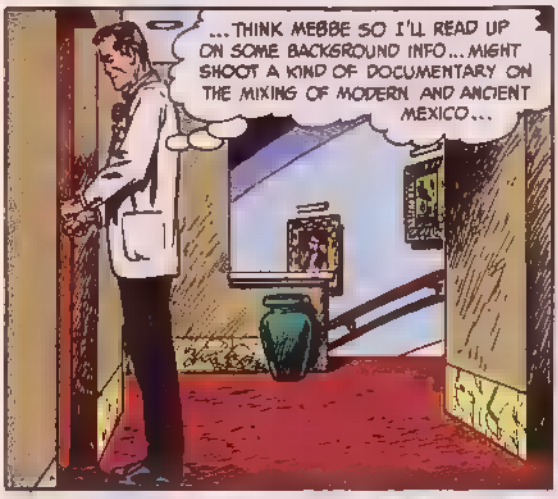
TO HIS EMPLOYER, RAMPART'S CAMERA IS ONLY A MEANS OF RECORDING NEWS EVENTS.

TO STEVE 'SLICK' RAMPART, IT IS ALSO A MEANS OF EXPRESSING A WELL-HIDDEN ARTISTIC SOUL...

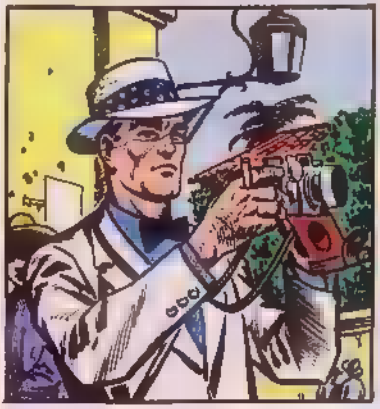


IN THE HOTEL DINING ROOM THAT EVENING...

MAN! WITH THIS SORT OF INDOOR SCENERY WHO LOOKS AT A MENU?



THE NEXT DAY, RAMPART TAKES THE SAME ROUTE AS THE DAY BEFORE AND TRIES TO RE-TAKE ALL THE SHOTS ON THE STOLEN ROLLS OF FILM...



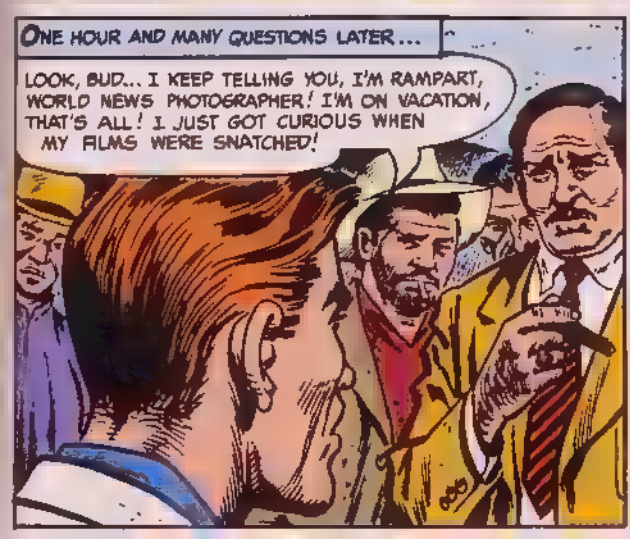
YOU SEE, I WAS RIGHT! THERE IS THE AMERICAN WITH THE CAMERA... AND AGAIN HE TAKES THE PICTURE OF THIS HOUSE, JUST AS YESTERDAY WHEN HE TOOK A PICTURE AS I WAS ENTERING! GO AND BRING HIM TO ME!

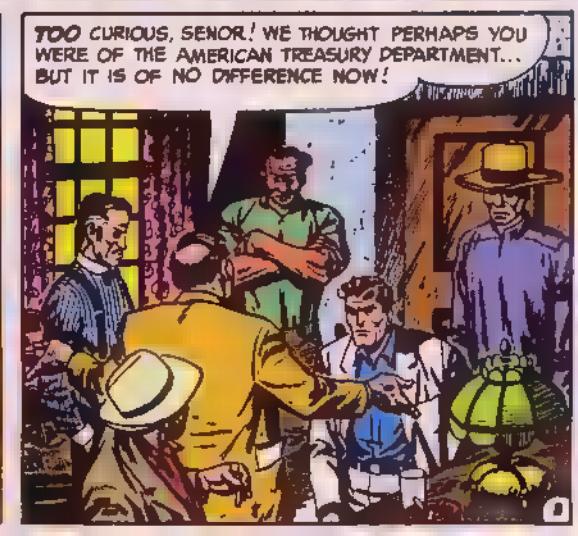
OH! OH! HERE IT COMES!

CAREFUL, BOYS! YOU'LL BREAK THE LENS!

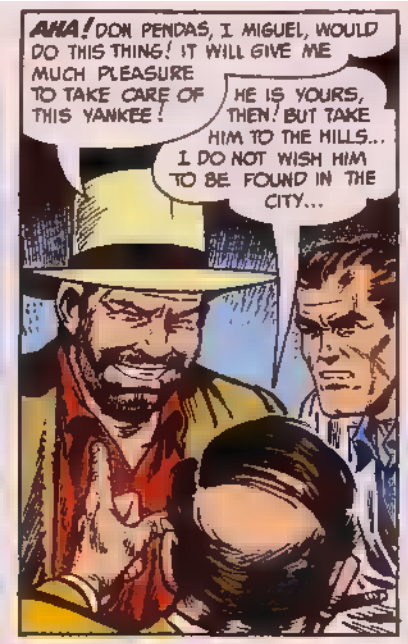
HEY! HEY! YOU REALLY PLAY ROUGH!

OOOOOF!

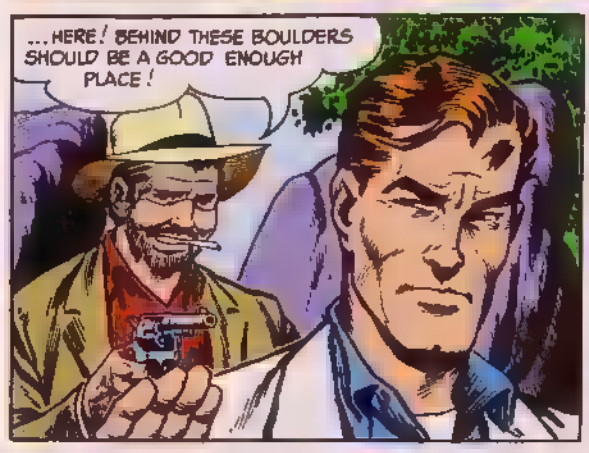

ONE HOUR AND MANY QUESTIONS LATER...
LOOK, BUD... I KEEP TELLING YOU, I'M RAMPART, WORLD NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER! I'M ON VACATION, THAT'S ALL! I JUST GOT CURIOUS WHEN MY FILMS WERE SNATCHED!


TOO CURIOUS, SENOR! WE THOUGHT PERHAPS YOU WERE OF THE AMERICAN TREASURY DEPARTMENT... BUT IT IS OF NO DIFFERENCE NOW!

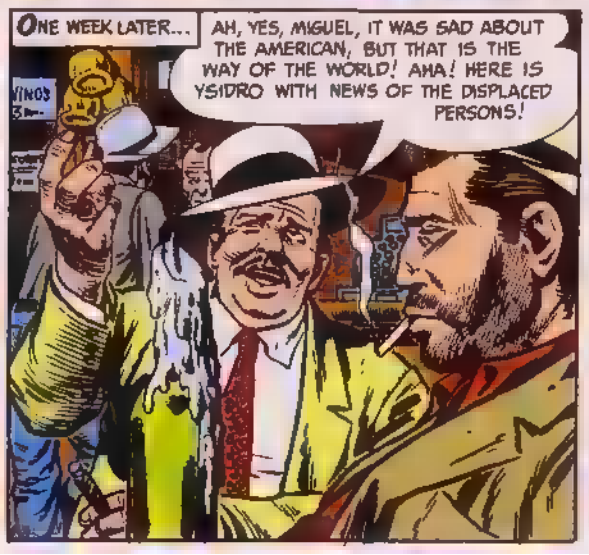
THOUGH WE ARE FORCED TO BELIEVE YOUR STORY, YOU NOW KNOW OUR FACES. IT IS MOST SAD, SENOR RAMPART, BUT WE MUST DISPOSE OF YOU!


AHA! DON PENDAS, I MIGUEL, WOULD DO THIS THING! IT WILL GIVE ME MUCH PLEASURE TO TAKE CARE OF THIS YANKEE!
HE IS YOURS, THEN! BUT TAKE HIM TO THE HILLS... I DO NOT WISH HIM TO BE FOUND IN THE CITY...

LATER...
STRAIGHT AHEAD, SENOR! I WILL TELL YOU WHEN TO STOP!


...HERE! BEHIND THESE BOULDERS SHOULD BE A GOOD ENOUGH PLACE!

The Metropolitan
AMERICAN SLAIN
World-Press Photographer Is Shot On Mexican Vacation!!
DAILY
PHOTO
SLAI
Herald
NEW YORK

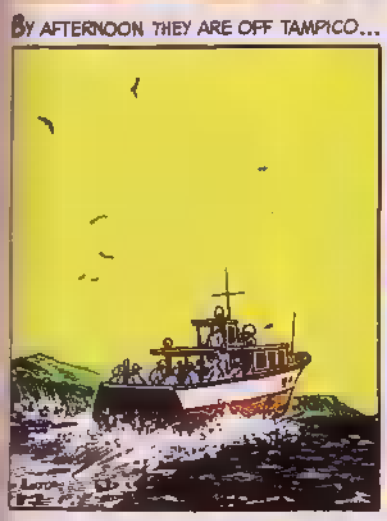

ONE WEEK LATER...
AH, YES, MIGUEL, IT WAS SAD ABOUT THE AMERICAN, BUT THAT IS THE WAY OF THE WORLD! AHA! HERE IS YSIDRO WITH NEWS OF THE DISPLACED PERSONS!

...SIX OF THEM THIS TIME! SIX!... AND THEY WILL PAY MUCH MONEY TO BE TAKEN TO THE UNITED STATES!
SIX OF THEM! SANTOS! THIS WILL MAKE US MUCH, MUCH MONEY... NEVER BEFORE HAVE WE SMUGGLED SO MANY AT ONE TIME!

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...
...SO YOU SEE, SENOR, IF YOU WISH US TO TAKE YOU INTO THE UNITED STATES IN THIS MANNER, I MUST INSIST THAT YOU OBEY THE ORDERS OF MY MEN... OTHERWISE WE SHALL ALL BE CAUGHT!

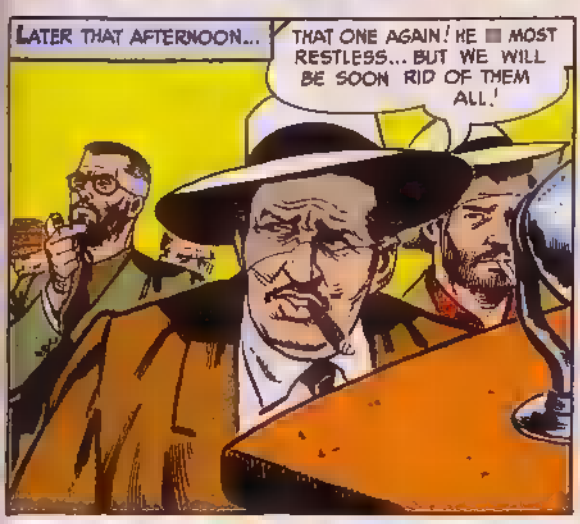
BY TRUCK, THE D.P.'S ARE TAKEN TO THE COAST OUTSIDE OF TUXPAN, THEN EARLY ONE MORNING A FISHING PARTY SETS SAIL INTO THE GULF OF MEXICO...

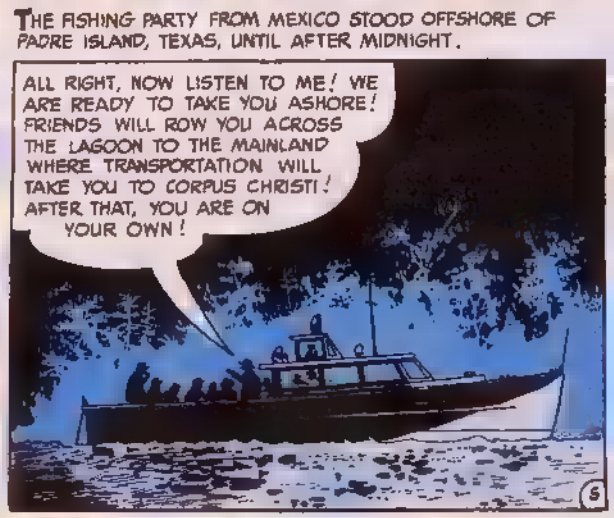
THEY HEAD NORTH AS THE SUN RISES...
HEY, BIG ONE! SIT DOWN! YOU MOVE ABOUT TOO MUCH! SIT DOWN!


BY AFTERNOON THEY ARE OFF TAMPICO...

ALL NIGHT THEY CONTINUE NORTH AT 12 KNOTS AN HOUR... AND THEN... ANOTHER DAWN...
SENOR BIG ONE, YOU WERE TOLD TO STAY PUT!

SOON THEY PASS SANTA ROSA...


LATER THAT AFTERNOON...
THAT ONE AGAIN! HE ■ MOST RESTLESS... BUT WE WILL BE SOON RID OF THEM ALL!

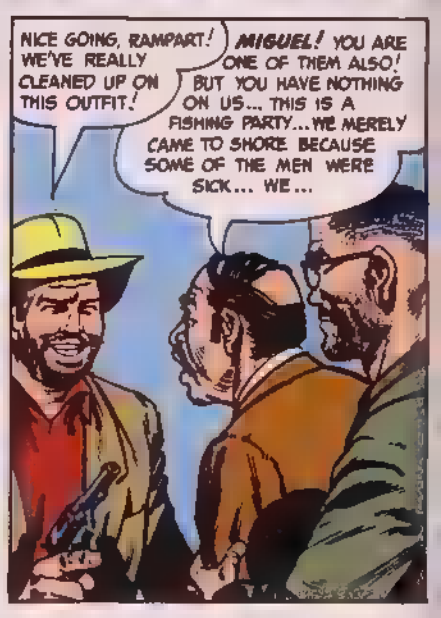

THE FISHING PARTY FROM MEXICO STOOD OFFSHORE OF PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS, UNTIL AFTER MIDNIGHT.
ALL RIGHT, NOW LISTEN TO ME! WE ARE READY TO TAKE YOU ASHORE! FRIENDS WILL ROW YOU ACROSS THE LAGOON TO THE MAINLAND WHERE TRANSPORTATION WILL TAKE YOU TO CORPUS CHRISTI! AFTER THAT, YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN!

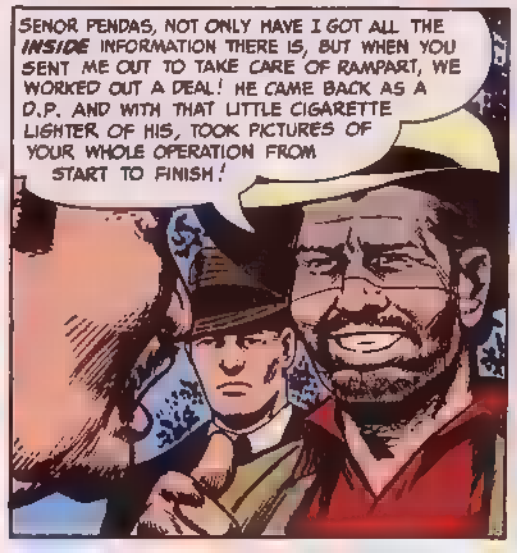
THEN AS THE PARTY LANDED...
ALRIGHT, YOU MEN! STAND WHERE YOU ARE!

TREASURY AGENTS! I MUST ESCAPE!

NO YOU DON'T, BUSTER! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS!

YOU FOOL! THEY WILL GET YOU TOO! UNH!
I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU, BUD... THEY'VE HAD ME FOR TWENTY-ODD YEARS!


NICE GOING, RAMPART! WE'VE REALLY CLEANED UP ON THIS OUTFIT!
MIGUEL! YOU ARE ONE OF THEM ALSO! BUT YOU HAVE NOTHING ON US... THIS IS A FISHING PARTY... WE MERELY CAME TO SHORE BECAUSE SOME OF THE MEN WERE SICK... WE...


SENOR PENDAS, NOT ONLY HAVE I GOT ALL THE INSIDE INFORMATION THERE IS, BUT WHEN YOU SENT ME OUT TO TAKE CARE OF RAMPART, WE WORKED OUT A DEAL! HE CAME BACK AS A D.P. AND WITH THAT LITTLE CIGARETTE LIGHTER OF HIS, TOOK PICTURES OF YOUR WHOLE OPERATION FROM START TO FINISH!

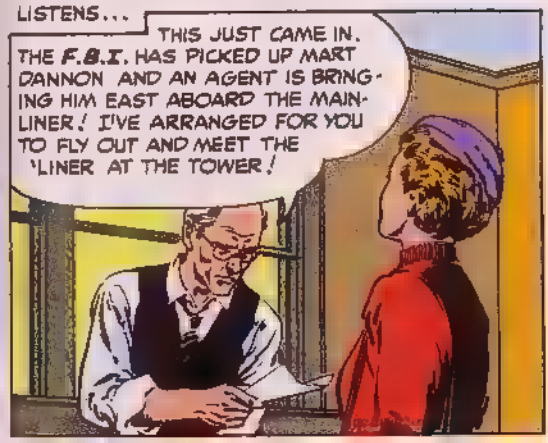
WELL, RAMPART, I GUESS NOW YOU'LL BE GOING BACK TO MEXICO CITY TO FINISH OUT YOUR VACATION, EH?
MEXICO?

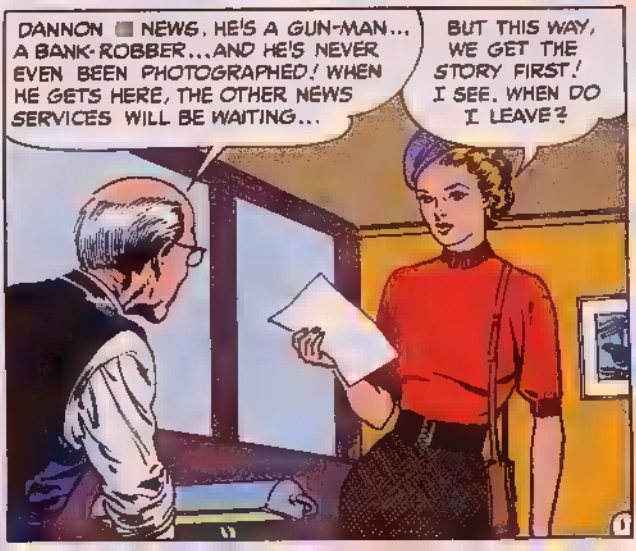
TIME: ONE WEEK LATER – SETTING: MIAMI BEACH.
MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME... 'SEE AMERICA FIRST!'
THE END

GERI HAMILTON

THIS IS THE SPOT, GERI. NOTHING MUCH THERE. JUST AN AUTOMATIC TOWER WHERE THROUGH TRAINS STOP TO TAKE ON WATER! BUT YOU'VE GOT A DATE AT THAT TOWER IN JUST FOUR HOURS, WITH A KILLER!

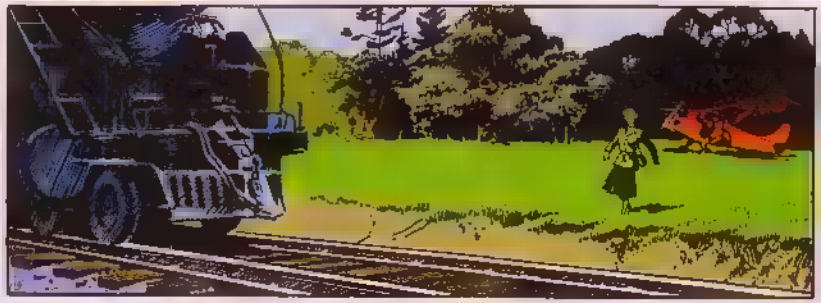
THE WORD IS SAID QUIETLY. KILLER. IT HANGS IN THE AIR. AN UGLY WORD. BUT THESE ARE THE OFFICES OF *WORLD PRESS*. HERE, WORDS ARE TOOLS...EVEN UGLY WORDS. SO A REPORTER JUST LISTENS...





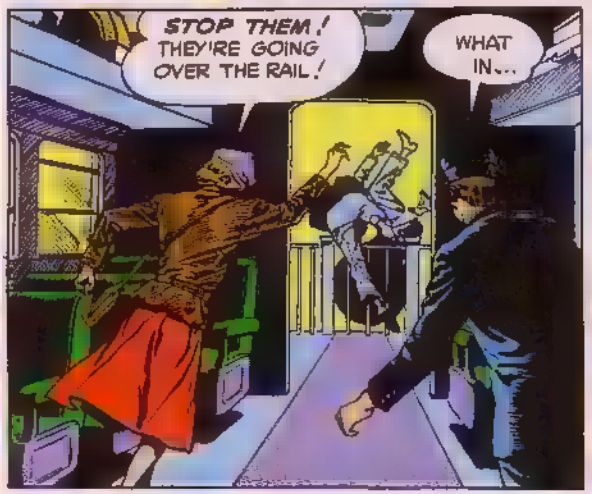
SOME WORDS ARE UGLY, YES, BUT A STORY ■ A STORY... EVEN TO A REPORTER WHO ALSO HAPPENS TO BE A FEMALE. SO FOUR HOURS LATER...

THERE SHE IS, MISS HAMILTON. THE MAINLINER. WE MADE IT RIGHT ON THE NOSE! WE'LL SIT DOWN ■ THAT CLEARING!

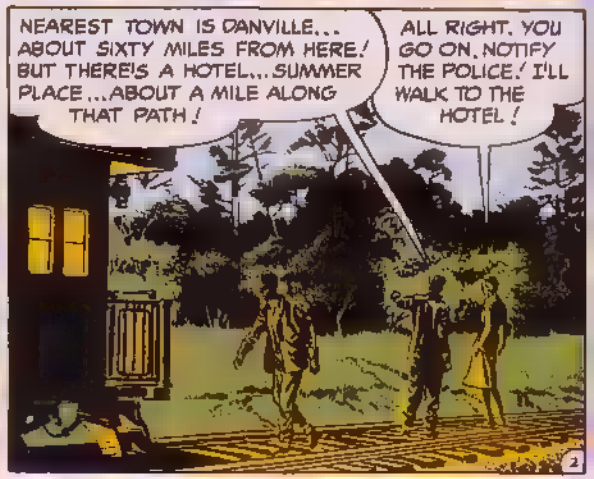


FIVE MINUTES, AND THE THIRSTY MAW OF THE LOCOMOTIVE HAS BEEN FILLED. THE TRAIN MOVES ON. EVERYTHING HAS GONE ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE. BUT... IT IS THE UNEXPECTED THAT PROVES A REPORTER'S WORTH!

F.B.I., EH? SO THAT'S WHY THOSE TWO WERE HANDCUFFED TOGETHER. THEY'RE ABOARD, MISS, THEY JUST WENT OUT ONTO THE OBSERVATION PLATFORM!



IT TAKES PERHAPS HALF A MINUTE. ONE QUICK PULL ON THE EMERGENCY CORD AND THE MAINLINER GRINDS TO A HALT. BUT THEN...NOTHING...



THE WOODS ARE EERIE NOW...ALIVE WITH THE LONG SHADOWS OF SUNDOWN. BUT GERI IGNORES THE SHADOWS, THE CLUTCHING TWIGS, FOR SUDDENLY THE STORY HAS BECOME *BIG*...

A CAR? NO MA'AM! WOULDN'T BE MUCH USE IN THESE WOODS. WHY NOT WAIT, MISS? YOU SAID THEY'D NOTIFY THE SHERIFF!

IT WILL BE HOURS BEFORE HE GETS HERE! YOU MUST HAVE *SOME* KIND OF TRANSPORTATION!

I CAN LET YOU HAVE A HORSE AND RIDING CLOTHES. EVEN A GUN! BUT I'M THE CARETAKER...I CAN'T LEAVE. AND YOU'D GET LOST, SURE!

I'LL HAVE TO RISK THAT! I'LL TAKE THAT HORSE AND GUN, OLD TIMER...AND THANKS.

IT TAKES NERVE, LATER, TO PLUNGE BACK INTO THAT FORBIDDING BLACKNESS...BUT THE STORY BECKONS...

IN MOMENTS, IT IS AS IF GERI IS CUT OFF, ISOLATED FROM CIVILIZATION. IN AN HOUR SHE IS TIRED, STIFF WITH COLD...AND THE UNPLEASANT TRUTH CAN NO LONGER BE DENIED...

I'M... *LOST!*

THAT MAKES TWO OF US, MISS!

DON'T BE FRIGHTENED. MY NAME IS CARTER. BEN CARTER. I'M A FEDERAL AGENT. I WAS ABOARD THE MAINLINER WITH A PRISONER...HE JUMPED ME...

STAY WHERE YOU ARE. I KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE. I'M A REPORTER. BUT...THERE WERE TWO OF YOU! HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE NOT MART DANNON?

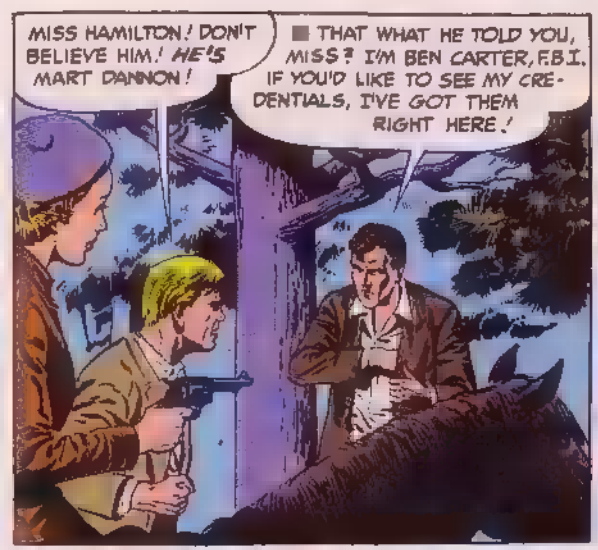
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN. I'M CARTER ALL RIGHT, BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT! DANNON KNOCKED ME OUT...STOLE MY WALLET. I LOST MY GUN...

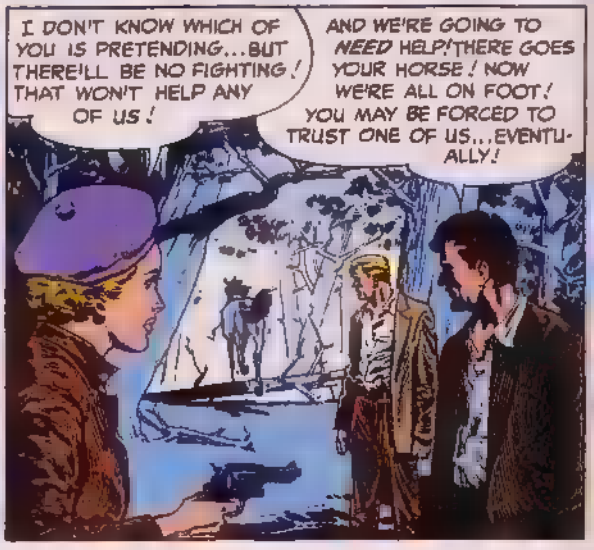
MAYBE, BUT I'LL PLAY SAFE. START WALKING. IF WE KEEP MOVING WE'LL FIND SOMEONE... EVENTUALLY! THEN WE'LL GET THE TRUTH.

AND GERI IS RIGHT. EVENTUALLY, SHE AND HER PRISONER *DO* MEET SOMEONE...BUT IT DOESN'T SOLVE HER RIDDLE. IT ONLY COMPLICATES IT...

LOOK, MISS HAMILTON... CAN'T WE STOP FOR A WHILE? I'M BEAT!

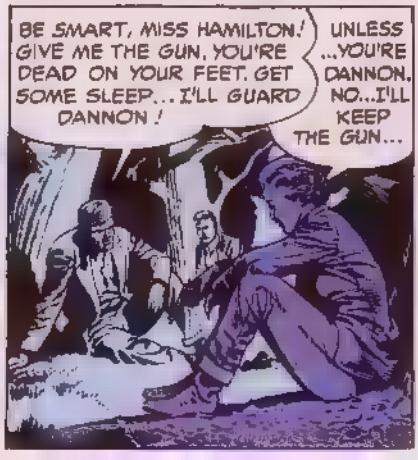
THAT'S RIGHT, DANNON... YOU'RE BEAT! OR RATHER... ***BEATEN!*** SOMEBODY ELSE FOUND YOU BEFORE I DID, EH?





BUT WHICH ONE? THAT IS THE QUESTION, A QUESTION THAT GROWS MORE IMPORTANT HOUR BY HOUR...

BY EVENING OF THE NEXT DAY GERI'S BODY IS NUMB WITH FATIGUE, THE WEARINESS DRAGS AT HER EYELIDS...



THE SECOND NIGHT IS A TORMENT, AND DAWN IS A HUNGRY, NAGGING TORTURE...

ON AND ON, BUT IT IS NO USE. GERI TRIES... DESPERATELY, AND THEN THERE IS ANOTHER NIGHT... A NIGHT WHEN HER EYELIDS DROP, FALL...

...WHA... WHO...

NO! DON'T! DON'T SHOOT!

WHA...

THIS TIME THERE ARE NO HOLDS BARRED. THE BATTLE IS FOUGHT SILENTLY, FEROCIOUSLY. IT IS SAVAGE, ANIMAL-LIKE ...AND SHORT!

HE... HE WAS GOING TO KILL YOU! HE'S DANNON!

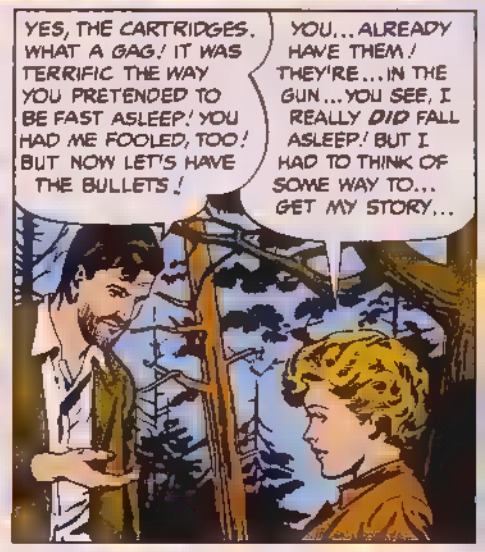
NO... I WASN'T GOING TO SHOOT HIM ...YOU... YOU'RE WRONG...

WRONG OR RIGHT, IT WON'T MATTER NOW, CARTER! YOU WOULDN'T SHOOT ME... BUT I'M NOT QUITE SO SQUEAMISH!

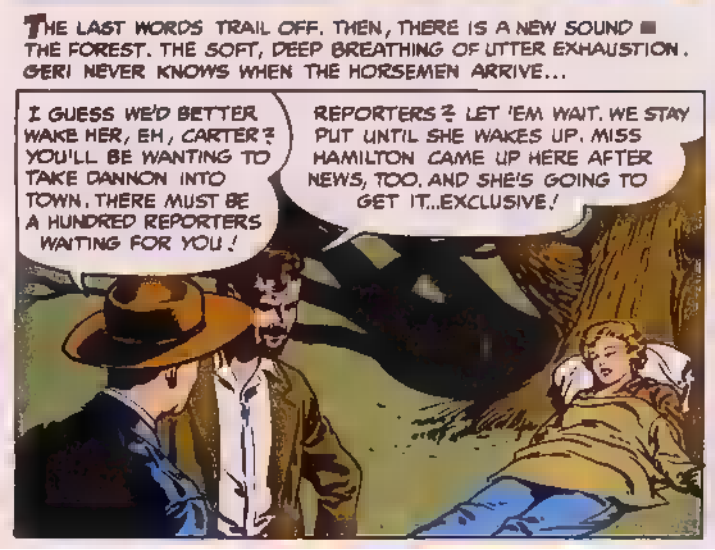
YOU... YOU'RE MART DANNON!

SO... MY TRICK WORKED! I KNEW THAT IF I LET ONE OF YOU GET THE GUN, I'D KNOW WHICH OF YOU WAS WHICH! BUT IT WON'T BE MUCH USE TO YOU ...WITHOUT CARTRIDGES!

WITHOUT???



THE LAST WORDS TRAIL OFF. THEN, THERE IS A NEW SOUND IN THE FOREST. THE SOFT, DEEP BREATHING OF UTTER EXHAUSTION. GERI NEVER KNOWS WHEN THE HORSEMEN ARRIVE...



FRONT PAGE STORY

City editor Paul Mason slumped back tiredly in his chair, glad for the moment's respite from the jangling phones and the rush to meet the late edition's deadline. One minute ago the presses had started rolling and as if knowing, the telephones had quieted. It was only a coincidence, pleasant while it lasted, but it wouldn't last long.

Some of the men were going out for a quick cup of coffee. Mason yelled for them to bring him some when they returned and one of them waved okay just before the door closed behind him. The phone rang.

"City desk. Mason here."

"Hi, chief. This is Phillips. I'm out in the Woodbridge section, and I think I have a page one story for you."

Mason grinned at the sound of the familiar voice. "Well, if it isn't my star reporter," he said as he lighted a cigarette. "Page one story, eh? Okay, let's hear it."

"Someone set fire to a house. Almost got everybody inside killed, but a little dog smelled the smoke and woke everybody up in time for them to get out. Can you use it?"

Mason pursed his lips thoughtfully. "I don't know, Ace. Things like that have happened before, you know. Dont' think I could put it on page one. Might fit it in on one of the inside pages. Human interest yarns about dogs are always readable."

"Wait a minute, chief," interrupted the star reporter. "I didn't tell you the whole story. It's got a lot more."

"Okay, shoot."

"Well," said the voice, "It's like this. Everybody got out of the house, but the other houses all caught fire and practically every fire engine in the city had to come help put them out. How's it sound?"

"Getting better. Anything else?"

"Yeah, plenty. Just about when they got the fire all put out, the man who lived in the first house saw his worst enemy standing across the street, laughing. He knew right away he was the one who started the fire, so he tried to grab him and they had a big fight."

"Hey, sounds good."

"Sure, but that's not all. This bad guy hopped in a car and got away and all the police went after him. They trailed him to his house and he started to shoot at them."

"Great!"

"Sure. They had a real gun battle. They stood there for two hours, shooting it out. No, three hours. Until finally the police threw tear gas at him and he had to come out."

"Wow!"

"Yeah. But he wouldn't give up, even when he came out, so all the cops had to jump on him and knock him out before they got him."

"That's terrific, Ace. It'll make page one, all right. I'll see that you get a bonus for this job!"

"Gee, swell! Aren't I a good reporter, daddy?"

"You sure are, son," Mason laughed. "Now put your mother on."

DATELINE: RIO PARA

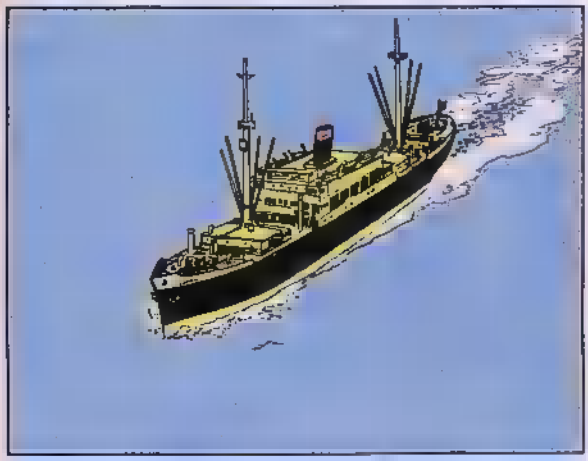
REMEMBER, KEITH... BE CAREFUL! I WANT YOU TO INTERVIEW CONDON, BUT I WANT YOU BACK ALIVE! AND CONDON MAY BE DANGEROUS!

IF HE'S WHAT WE THINK HE IS, HE'S PLENTY DANGEROUS! BUT DON'T WORRY, MAC... I'LL WATCH IT! AND I'LL GET THAT INTERVIEW, TOO!

EMPRESS

PIER 13

THE GRAY CONTOUR OF LAND FADES INTO THE DISTANCE, AND THE COASTAL FREIGHTER EMPRESS IS SUDDENLY ALONE, PLOWING SOUTHWARD THROUGH THE ATLANTIC...

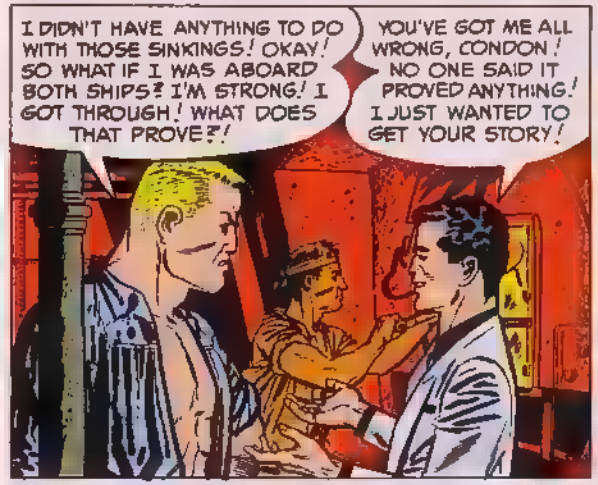


ABOARD THE EMPRESS, KEITH MICHAELS, WORLD PRESS CORRESPONDENT, TALKS WITH THE SHIP'S MASTER...

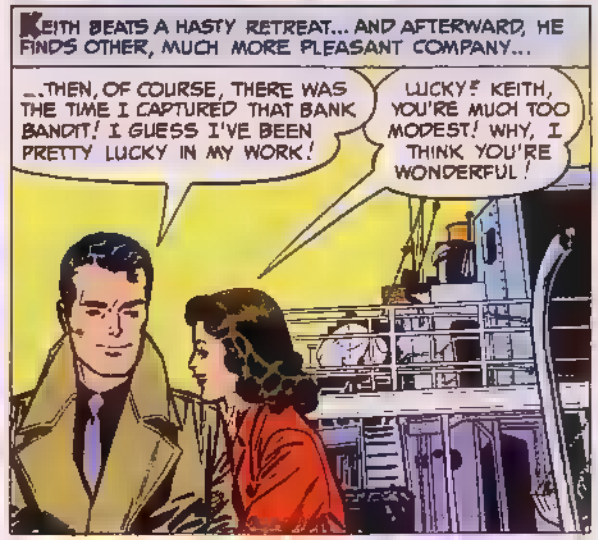
NO, MISTER MICHAELS, THERE ARE FOUR OTHER PASSENGERS, BUT WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SOMETHING MAY HAPPEN TO THE EMPRESS?

TWO THINGS, CAPTAIN! ONE... THIS SHIPPING LINE HAS HAD **TWO** UNEXPLAINED SINKINGS RECENTLY! IT'S POSSIBLE THEY WERE SUNK FOR THEIR INSURANCE!

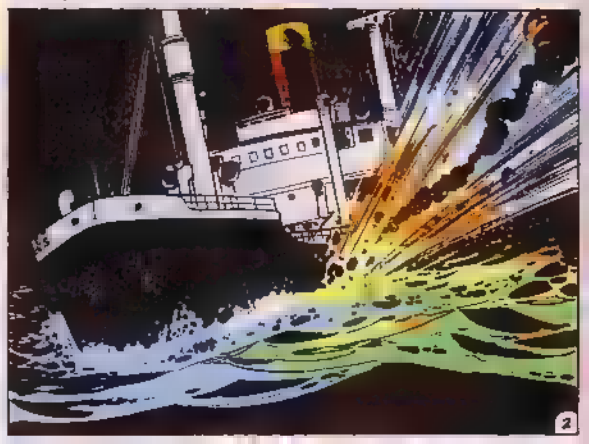
BUT BUSINESS COMES BEFORE PLEASURE. LATER, KEITH SEEKS OUT MIKE CONDON IN THE STOKEHOLD...



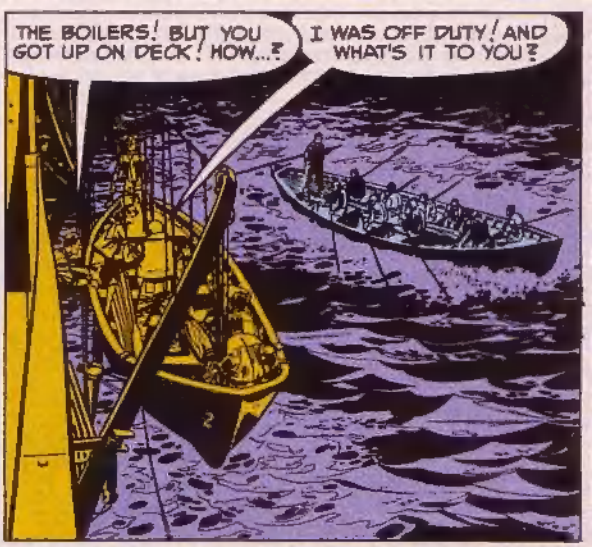
KEITH BEATS A HASTY RETREAT... AND AFTERWARD, HE FINDS OTHER, MUCH MORE PLEASANT COMPANY...



FOR A WEEK, THE EMPRESS BEATS SOUTHWARD... AND FOR A WEEK NOTHING HAPPENS. KEITH SQUIRES RUTH HASTINGS. BUT WHEN SOMETHING DOES HAPPEN AT LAST, IT HAPPENS WITH A BANG!



...THAT WAS AN EXPLOSION! CONDON! WHAT HAPPENED?!
THE SHIP'S BOILERS BLEW UP! THIS TUB WILL BE ON THE BOTTOM IN A FEW MINUTES!


THE BOILERS! BUT YOU GOT UP ON DECK! HOW...?
I WAS OFF DUTY! AND WHAT'S IT TO YOU?

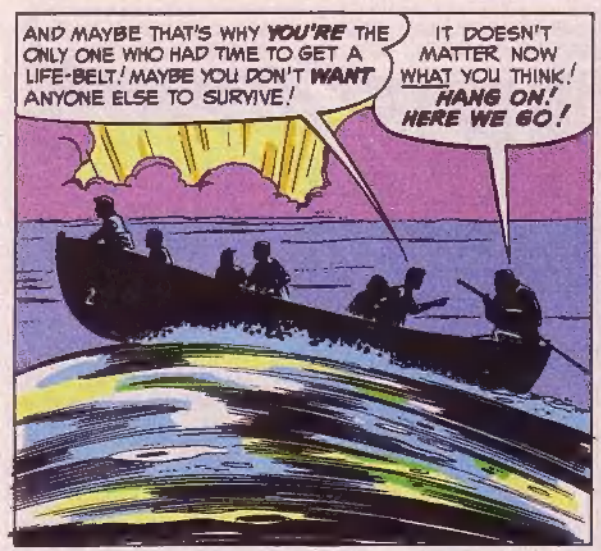
FRANTICALLY, THE MEN HAUL ON THEIR OARS, AND THE EMPRESS SLIDES OUT OF SIGHT BENEATH THE WATERS...

THE NIGHT'S HOURS DRAG...AND WHEN DAWN APPEARS THE LIFEBOAT IS ALONE ON THE OPEN SEA...
BLAST IT! WE'VE BECOME SEPARATED FROM THE OTHER LIFEBOATS DURING THE NIGHT! THAT LEAVES ME IN COMMAND! NOW GET THIS! WE'RE OFF THE COAST OF BRAZIL. WE HEAD WEST! ANY OBJECTIONS... MICHAELS?
NO...

THE DAY PASSES, AND BY DUSK OF THE SECOND DAY LAND IS SIGHTED...

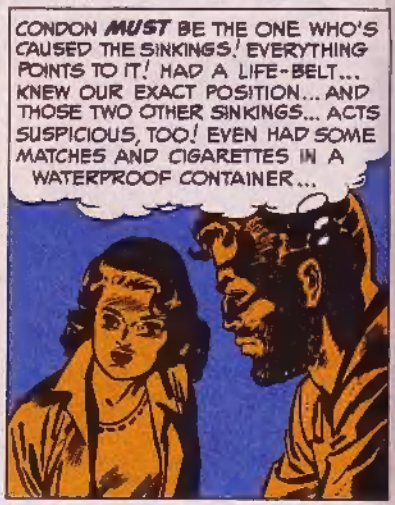
THERE IT IS... JUST LIKE I SAID! LAND!
SURE! BUT HOW DO WE GET ASHORE? THOSE BREAKERS ARE STRIKING A REEF! WE'LL BE SMASHED TO BITS ON IT!

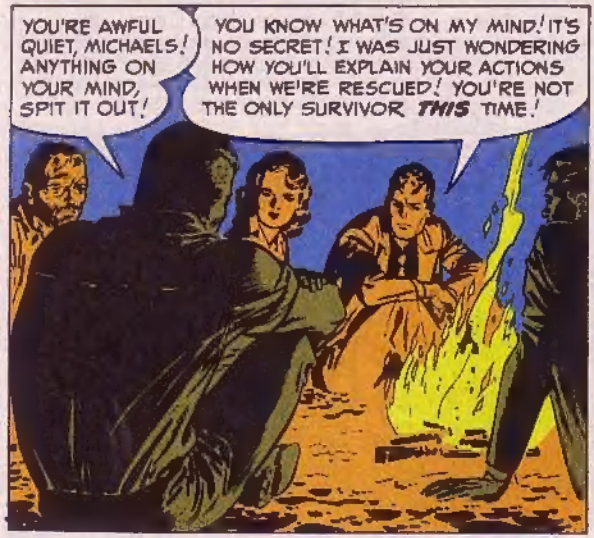
WE'LL RIDE A WAVE IN! IT'LL TAKE US RIGHT OVER THE REEF!
OVER! YOU'RE CRAZY! WE'LL BE SPITTED ON A ROCK! BUT MAYBE THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, EH, CONDON? YOU'RE PROBABLY A STRONG SWIMMER, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US?!

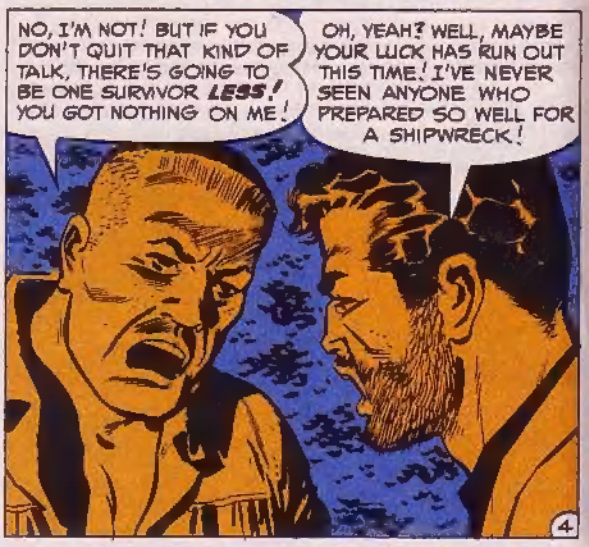


SOMEHOW THEY MAKE IT TO SHORE. NO LIVES ARE LOST, BUT ONLY ONE MAN IS NOT SPENT AND GASPING...

LATER, BESIDE A ROARING FIRE...







BUT SEVERAL DAYS PASS BEFORE A PASSING SHIP SEES THE SIGNAL FIRE'S SMOKE...

FEELING BETTER, MICHAELS?
MY JAW... WHAT... WHAT HIT ME? CONDON! DID YOU GET...CONDON?

HE TOLD US WHY YOU FOUGHT! BUT CONDON ISN'T THE MAN, MICHAELS! THE POLICE GOT THAT MAN A FEW DAYS AGO!
YOU...YOU MEAN CONDON IS INNOCENT? WHAT A DOPE I'VE BEEN!

WE GOT THE NEWS BY RADIO. THE GUILTY MAN WAS WORKING FOR ONE OF THE SHIPPING COMPANY'S OFFICERS! I WILL SAY, THOUGH, THAT YOU HAD EVERY RIGHT TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF CONDON!
MMM... FAT LOT OF GOOD IT DID ME! THAT GUY HITS LIKE A MULE!

FROM THE WAY YOU LOOK, I'D SAY HE HITS LIKE TWO MULES! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE RADIO ROOM! I CAN AT LEAST SEND WORLD PRESS AN EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE SINKING OF THE EMPRESS!

CONDON! YOU'RE JUST THE GUY I WANT TO SEE. I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR ACTING THE WAY I DID.
SURE THING, MICHAELS! NO HARD FEELINGS! I'M SORRY I HAD TO RACK YOU UP, BUT I TOLD YOU I HAD NO PART IN THE SINKINGS!
RADIO ROOM

RUTH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!
WHY, I JUST FINISHED SENDING IN MY STORY, KEITH! TO EASTERN NEWS SERVICE! YOU THINK YOU FELLAS AT WORLD PRESS ARE THE ONLY ONES ON THE BALL?

...NOW, ABOUT THAT INTERVIEW YOU WANTED...
OH, MISTER CONDON, YOU SEAMEN ARE SO ...SO MASTERFUL!
OH, BROTHER ... MY MOTHER SAID THERE'D BE DAYS LIKE THIS!
THE END